

# The Ballistic Missile as a Symbol of Asymmetry in East Asia

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## *Table of Contents*

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Shaping Strategic Trends</b>	<b>3</b>
I. Asia: A Post Cold War Child?	<b>3</b>
II. Creeping Modernization	<b>4</b>
III. The Fading Age of Colonialism	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 3. Why Go Ballistic? (The Appeal of Asymmetry)</b>	<b>14</b>
I. China: Perceptions	<b>16</b>
II. China's Missile Force	<b>21</b>
III. The Priorities of Modernization	<b>22</b>
IV. Modernizing the Missile Force	<b>27</b>
V. Sino/US Relations	<b>28</b>
VI. North Korea	<b>31</b>
VII. North Korea's Missile Force	<b>34</b>
VIII. Comparison of National Contexts	<b>36</b>
<b>Chapter 4. Strategic Culture</b>	<b>39</b>
I. China	<b>40</b>
II. North Korea	<b>41</b>
<b>Chapter 5. Conclusions</b>	<b>44</b>
I. The New Face of Asia	<b>45</b>
II. The Scud Reaction	<b>47</b>
III. Future Prospects	<b>48</b>
<b>Bibliography.</b>	<b>50</b>

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## *Illustrations*

	<i>Page</i>
<b>Figure 1. China's Maritime Strategy</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Figure 2. China's Strategic Actions</b>	<b>30</b>

## *Tables*

<b>Table 1. China's Missile Force</b>	<b><i>Page</i></b> <b>21</b>
<b>Table 2. North Korea's Missile Force</b>	<b>35</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** The Ballistic Missile as a Symbol of Asymmetry in East Asia .

**Author:** Major C. J. Davis, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** The central thesis of this paper offers two assertions:

- Economic vitality and declining Western influence in Asia are gradually transforming Asia from a colonial geographic identity into a region with a modern and uniquely "Asian" consciousness.
- The tremendous political and military dividends yielded by the ballistic missile are extremely seductive, have established it as asymmetric warfare's touchstone, and have made it a likely weapon of choice for Asian nations as they undertake the slow process of military modernization.

**Discussion:** As The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) seeks to redefine and identify its role as a regional leader and the next probable challenger to a unipolar world, it shall be seeking relatively simple, interim solutions for challenging U.S. security interests and forward based U.S. military forces in Asia. Additionally, as the disparity between the North and South Korean economies continues to broaden, North Korea shall, like China, be seeking short-range solutions for intimidation and recognition. For both countries, a significant part of the answer has been the development and deployment of modern, accurate ballistic missiles. The appeal for, and zealous accumulation of these asymmetric weapons are among the most alarming and destabilizing strategic developments that Western policy makers must dissect and engage. Ballistic missile systems, their associated technologies, and their potential for delivering weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are nullifying Western advantages in conventional weapons and transforming Asia's military geography.

This paper is an examination of the nascent forces in Asia that have created today's asymmetric frenzy, and how the proliferation of ballistic missile technology in both China and North Korea (DPNK) will affect U.S. national strategy and military doctrine. It is an attempt to explain why these weapons are appearing in abundance today, and what their presence means to a region awakening from decades of slumber beneath Western bed sheets.

**Conclusion:** Creeping economic modernization and fading Western colonialism have set the conditions for the spread of missile programs and technologies throughout the emerging economies of Asia. Concurrently, the U.S. has been extremely slow to admit that a policy of "Arms Control", or attempting to lock nations into a relatively low state of military development via diplomacy and treaties, has failed. The tremendous political and military dividends yielded by the ballistic missile are extremely seductive, have established it as asymmetric warfare's touchstone, and have made it a likely weapon of choice for Asian nations as they undertake the slow process of military modernization. *The essential strategic issue is not whether the U.S. can keep Asian armies isolated from sophisticated technologies, but rather, can the U.S. adapt to an Asia in which military modernization is eventually inevitable.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

The National Strategic Studies Group was chartered roughly one year ago to divine its vision of what the global political/economic environment would look like in 20-25 years. That vision shall be presented and briefed to the next American president two days after he assumes the office of the presidency. The brief, entitled “A New World Coming” shall be a significant product: its predictions, trend analyses and recommendations may form the warp and weft of American national security strategy for the foreseeable future. The Group anchored its study in the beliefs that great institutions do not change themselves, and that the global environment shall be highlighted by increasing chaos, a ubiquitous diffusion of disruptive technologies and the lack of a stabilizing global mechanism for the international economy. The representatives also concurred that no nation could posture itself as a global peer fielding a conventional military force that might significantly threaten the United States for the next 20 years.

These assumptions are by no means visionary, yet they are critical for future national security concerns abroad. It is arguable that these global “traits” already exist in their infancy, and that the first generation of political and military consequences are already being cultured and matured in the current international environment. In this context, East Asia is the perfect prism through which to view the evolutionary process predicted in “The New World Coming”. Global markets and the rapid diffusion of disruptive technology are shaping a new strategic dynamic in the region. In spite of this, an American dialogue on national security issues in Asia is out of vogue and stagnant. This distinctly American reluctance to embrace the new Asian dynamism is contributing

to the attenuation of both our strategic influence and military strength throughout the region.

As The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) seeks to redefine and identify its role as a regional leader and the next probable challenger to a unipolar world, it shall be seeking relatively simple, interim solutions for challenging U.S. security interests and forward based U.S. military forces in Asia. Additionally, as the disparity between the North and South Korean economies continues to broaden, North Korea shall, like China, be seeking short-range solutions for intimidation and recognition. For both countries, a significant part of the answer has been the development and deployment of modern, accurate ballistic missiles. The appeal for, and zealous accumulation of these asymmetric weapons are among the most alarming and destabilizing strategic developments that Western policy makers must dissect and engage. Ballistic missile systems, their associated technologies, and their potential for delivering weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are nullifying Western advantages in conventional weapons and transforming Asia's military geography.

This paper is an examination of the nascent forces in Asia that have created its asymmetric trends, and how the proliferation of ballistic missile technology in both China and North Korea (DPNK) will affect U.S. national strategy and military doctrine. It is an attempt to explain why these weapons are appearing in abundance today, and what their presence means to a region awakening from decades of slumber beneath Western bed sheets.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Shaping Strategic Trends**

A detailed analysis of the factors responsible for today's East Asian strategic climate is beyond the scope of this paper. However, in order to understand the area's poignant strategic security issues, several phenomena merit consideration. Specifically, these events are the fall of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), and the powerful confluence of the decline of colonialism and the inexorable creep of modernization across Asia.

#### **I. ASIA: A POST COLD-WAR CHILD?**

Many discussions of the genesis of East Asia's current strategic environment reflect back to 1991 when the world witnessed the precipitous failure of the FSU. These discussions describe the subsequent strategic age as "*The Post Cold-War Era*". This can be misleading when applied to Asia: it may lead one to believe that strategic events occurring today are the result of processes a mere nine years old. The discussions emphasize that from the end of World War Two until 1991, the United States' strategic thought was consumed with the rigors and dangers of the Cold War. They also (correctly) claim that as the obsession of this war waned, U.S. strategic vision was granted greater latitude. However, they are terribly flawed when they claim that "new" forces are changing the Asian climate. This misguided observation obscures reality: the "new" forces actually have their genesis in events decades old.

Undeniably, the FSU's dissolution profoundly disturbed international strategic rhythms: new nation-states have since formed, old alliances have become obsolete, regional hegemonic roles have changed and new strategic opportunities have abounded. Although the Soviet Union's fall was certainly a momentous watershed with profound ramifications, in the context of East Asia it must be seen in far more simplistic terms. It needs to be understood not as an event that fundamentally shaped a new Post Cold-War Era, but as the disappearance of a veneer that has hidden two discreet forces at work for decades: the creeping modernization of Asia and the declination of colonialism. These phenomena are part of an enduring, powerful Asian cultural/economic current that, until the recent failure of the FSU, flowed beneath the Cold War's strategic strata. Benjamin Schwarz thoughtfully articulates this sentiment:

Even if East Asia rose in the American consciousness just as the Soviet Union receded, to define the economic and geopolitical transformation of East Asia as a post-Cold War phenomenon Americanizes and trivializes a development in international (not American) politics far of greater impact than the Cold War itself.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. CREEPING MODERNIZATION**

American foreign policy planners first recognized East Asia's strategic importance when they negotiated the Washington naval treaties in the early 1900s. These treaties were the first edition of arms control aimed across the Pacific, and they sought to limit the production/size/tonnage/number of battleships Japan could produce. Clairvoyant naval planners at the Navy's War College in Newport, Rhode Island recognized as early as 1907 the strategic threat that a modernizing Japan posed to the United States. Their answer was the incredibly insightful War Plan Orange, which was a specific scenario and set of assumptions regarding a possible war in the Pacific and Asia. The focus and

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Schwarz, "Why America Thinks It Has To Run The World", The Atlantic Monthly, June 1996, 15.

concerns of War Plan Orange were well placed: when Japan initiated its Centrifugal Offensive in 1941, it forever changed the way in which America looked at Asian geography. The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor was a seminal event that shattered the myth of distance: naval and aeronautical technologies had compressed the globe. The geographic and psychological sanctuaries of the Pacific's vast expanses faded forever, and Americans witnessed firsthand how events in distant reaches could seriously affect their nation's security. Isolation as a policy disappeared in a day, and hemispheric defense gave way to the notion of national security.<sup>2</sup>

Today, more than fifty years after Pearl Harbor, an increasingly modernized Asia is ascending on a tide of economic success. Thus, a process that was first seen in its infancy at the beginning of this century by the astute authors of War Plan Orange continues today with exponentially greater magnitude. As Paul Bracken has observed: "over one hundred years, the *concept* (emphasis mine) of Asia had been created by Western maritime power, and then deconstructed by the cold war [...] and then changed again in the 1970s as general economic boom spread over Asia's rimlands."<sup>3</sup> The boom first began in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, eventually spreading to Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and lastly China. Reflecting the fundamental changes the boom engendered, geographic names were modified to reflect the economic creep: *Asia-Pacific Basin-The Asia/Pacific Region*. Economic and financial dynamism were creating a protean geographic zone of modernization. Today, as a direct result of growing Asian prosperity, the geographic perceptions of Asia are once again similar to those

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Bracken, *Fire In the East: The Rise of the Asian Military Power and the Second Nuclear Age*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Bracken, 24.

immediately after Pearl Harbor: the Pacific Ocean is not a great divider of nations, it is a great connector.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the world experienced and acknowledged the rippling effects of the 1997 Asian financial crisis affirmed the degree to which Asia was globally interconnected. Its emerging economic flourish is slowly deconstructing the global and regional buffer zones that its geographic expanse and previous isolation have traditionally afforded.

Sophisticated information and communication technologies are rapidly and radically changing the way in which national and regional economies interact. “It’s a small world after all” is an all too accurate (if not original) aphorism to describe how connectivity has changed the global economy. This connectivity has resurrected an interest in the dynamic known as “globalization”. Globalization is the international linkage of economies and cultures, and it has become a particularly contentious issue. This contention is rooted in the way in which globalization is compared and contrasted with nationalism. Globalization’s proponents pair the benign, idyllic imagery of a unified, monolithic, modernized planetary economy against the “darker” forces of nationalism, and the provocative images of extremism and fundamentalism. Globalization’s unity is expected to supplant the chaos of nationalism.

In a strictly financial sense, intuition serves correctly when it suggests that worldwide economic linkages could benefit all involved: the tenets of globalization can undoubtedly improve the quality of life for millions of people, more equitably redistribute wealth, and more efficiently utilize precious natural resources. The latest evidence overwhelmingly shows that globalization has certainly made the world’s

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<sup>4</sup> Bracken, 24.

markets broader in scope. Fidelity Investments' latest "ViewPoint", beseeching its readers to think globally when setting investment strategies, underscores this:

Today, the relationship between a stock's performance and its home country has weakened. Conversely, the links between a company and its industry group have become stronger. In other words, stocks increasingly relate to an industry's performance rather than domestic markets.<sup>5</sup>

Despite globalization's efficacious effect on industrial markets, it does not penetrate or link cultures and political systems. Globalization is neither a political nor cultural force, it is an *economic* force. Its greatest propensity is to unify industries, and not cultures. Its strength is anchored in its economic appeal. The notion of any nation or culture completely transcending its national interests in search of global economic cooperation is a difficult one to imagine. While a nation's economic prosperity and domestic tranquility can usually be correlated, the emerging world with a globally linked economy does not bear a close semblance to the Camelot the proponents of globalization wish to construct. Although Camelot is a pleasant Arthurian vision, it is unfortunately unlikely: few nations would allow the machinations of global linkage to assimilate their national uniqueness (culture, history, language, religion, etc.). Current trends suggest that Asian nations are entering global markets, gathering financial inertia, accessing/utilizing complex technologies that were previously incomprehensible, and subsequently transferring these technologies to military modernization programs and other instruments of sovereignty. This cycle supports the proposal that the dividends of globalization are actually being reinvested to strengthen the pillars of national power. The increasing amount of newly acquired capital many Asian nations are devoting to military technology and modernization is an interesting indicator. In the period from 1988-1994, China

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<sup>5</sup> Fidelity Investments, "ViewPoint", January 2000, 1.

consistently increased defense spending 13-15% per year. By 1995, defense spending increased 20% to \$7 billion US.<sup>6</sup> In 1999, China is estimated to have invested the equivalent of \$12.6 billion US in its military modernization programs.<sup>7</sup> Other Asian nations are following China's path: The ASEAN-6 (Brunei excluded) all virtually doubled defense spending from 1989 – 1995.<sup>8</sup>

Global markets have had the peculiar effect of creating a robust regional trade in East Asia: Taiwan (our ninth largest trading partner) is the number one investor in China;

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<sup>6</sup> Chong-Pin Lin, "The People's Liberation Army and the Fourteenth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party" paper presented to the Fourth Annual Staunton Hill Conference on the People's Liberation Army, Staunton Hill Virginia, August 27-29, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Ian James Storey, "Living with the Colossus: How Southeast Asian Countries Cope with China", Parameters, US Army War College Quarterly, No. 4, Winter 1999-2000, 118. Accurate estimates of annual Chinese military spending are difficult to obtain, and the numbers vary widely from Storey's low end of \$12.6 billion US, to Gregor's upper end of \$140 billion US. (See A. James Gregor's "Qualified Engagement, U.S. China Policy and Security Concerns" Naval War College Review, Spring 1999, 3.) Micheal D. Swaine's estimates ("China, Domestic Change and Foreign Policy", Rand, 1995, 76.) gravitate towards an unofficial \$15-\$22 billion US. All the sources agree that the official budgetary figures released by the Chinese **do not reflect** Research and Development funds, State Council appropriations, foreign weapons purchases, as well as income generated by foreign military sales and the PLA's commercial activities. Factoring in these variables, the authors "best guess" their numbers as follows: \$30 billion (Storey), \$48.5 billion (Gregor), and \$20 billion (Swaine). The important issue to take away on this discussion is the fact that expanding economic growth has allowed Chinese defense expenditures to increase in double-digit percentages since 1988, and that these expenditures remain, in Gregor's words: "obscure." As a relative comparison, Taiwan's defense budget in 2001 is projected to reach \$9.5 billion, and in the period from 1990-1997, "Taiwan ranked second to Saudi Arabia as the largest recipient of foreign arms with \$12 billion on contracts worth almost \$18 billion. (Patrick Tyler: "A Great Wall", New York: PublicAffairs, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ian James Storey, "Creeping Assertiveness: China, the Philippines and the South China Sea Dispute", Contemporary Southeast Asia, No.1, April 1999, 104. Although not truly within the purview of this paper, Japan, with the world's second largest economy, standouts out as THE notable exception, being an Asian nation to institutionally limit defense spending. Japanese 'pacifism' has been legally and philosophically adopted, with Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution "renouncing war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. [...] The right of belligerence by the state will not be recognized." Japan's National Defense Outline has limited the Self Defense Force (SDF) to 145,000 personnel. These acute reactions reflect Japan's distaste for its unchecked and militaristic imperialism that began in the late 1920s, and which eventually led to its defeat in World War II. Today's strict control of the SDF by the political leadership is an attempt to irradiate what Japan's ambassador to the United States in 1941 (Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura) later called "The principle cancer of Japan", that being the complete independence of the military from civilian control. (See D. Clayton James, "American and Japanese strategies in the Pacific War" in *Makers of Modern Strategy, from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*", Princeton University Press, 1986) In light of all these restrictive measures, it is interesting to note that Japan's avid use of nuclear power has given it a foundation from which an atomic bomb might be assembled within six months (Michio Kaku, "Asian America" WNCV television, 7 January.)

and the ASEAN nations are now trading over \$25 billion US with China.<sup>9</sup> Increasing nation-to-nation sales of military technology have accompanied this growing trade, and stand as a potent testimonial to globalization's dangerously destabilizing potential. Today, both China and North Korea are both deeply involved in the exportation of missile technology, missile components, and the technologies for weapons of mass destruction. Iran buys nuclear technology from Russia, and missile technology from Pakistan, North Korea and China; China sells missile technology to North Korea, Iran and Syria, and has virtually nurtured Pakistan's nuclear program since the early 1970s. These robust sales programs are increasing the number of nations buying and fielding accurate ballistic missiles. Most significantly, the sales are being accompanied by a growing mastery of the buyer's technological and industrial capabilities. Now, instead of having to rely on subsequent buys for "fleet" maintenance/upgrades, nations are developing the indigenous ability to maintain and develop their own arsenals. The technological knowledge base of the nations determined to acquire ballistic missiles has been established, and cannot be disrupted by new embargoes on technology. Asian nations, understanding that power makes some nations more sovereign than others, see ballistic missile technology as a viable source for bolstering national power, and the quests for credible ballistic missile programs has created a new arms race across Asia that is threatening to dismantle the existing international power structure.

The link between exaggerated nationalism and riveting technology recently took vivid form. The world bore witness as it watched India and Pakistan, amidst the protests

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Y.S. Cheng, "*China's ASEAN Policy in the 1990's: Pushing for Regional Multipolarity*", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, No.2, August 1999, 195.

of a “global” community, culminate almost twenty years of nuclear development and research by detonating nuclear testing devices in a frenzy of nationalistic pride. The fact that both India and Pakistan ignored U.S. pleas for restraint reflects a growing attitude among some Asian leaders that a close engagement with the United States could dilute their ability to use nationalism to enhance their control over their sources of national power. The United States embarrassingly discovered that it could no longer engage in a successful policy of arms control in Asia. There is absolutely no reason to assume that this same disruptive synergy will not continue to spread, and the United States, being pushed further and further towards the margins of this phenomenon, faces a new reality of waning strategic influence in an increasingly modernized East Asia.

The implications of military modernization are critical. The image of an Asian army used as an institution to forge a national identity, to indoctrinate the masses with a core curriculum of “nationhood”<sup>10</sup>, is disappearing. The armies of East Asia are slowly being restructured into professional standing organizations that may, in 20-30 years, be capable of power projection far beyond their national borders. The Chinese vision of a restructured PLA, as set forth in the 27 July 1998 White Paper entitled “China’s National Defense”, captures the essence this change:

The Chinese army strengthens itself by relying on science and technology, and strives to make the transition from a numerically superior type to a qualitatively efficient type, and from a manpower intensive type to a technology-intensive type [...] By 1990 the total reduction ( in manpower) had reached 1.039 million men. Since 1990, the size of the PLA has further shrunk through successive adjustments. When the drawdown of 500,000 has been completed, the total size of the PLA will be 2.5 million men.<sup>11</sup>

Specific goals and plans shall be discussed later in this paper, but it is significant to observe how the geographic “reach” of the armies of China and North Korea is increasing

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<sup>10</sup> Bracken, 73.

<sup>11</sup> White Paper, “*China’s National Defense*” July 27, 1998.



because of the introduction of disruptive technologies. Colloquially, it's referred to as the ability to "reach out and touch" your adversary. A more scholarly term would be "Military Geography", and it embraces how "changes in military technology affect changes in geographic influence."<sup>12</sup> As Asian nations restructure their armed forces and acquire long range weapons systems, their ability to credibly project power inevitably increases. Expanding zones of national economic and military interest and capabilities shall lead to overlapping zones of geographical and political influence. The propensity for idiosyncratic political/economic frictions of one nation to ricochet among other nations increases. Two simple examples help to illustrate: Japanese cities are no longer safe from a North Korean ballistic missile launched in frustration from famine or economic paralysis, and ASEAN members watch with trepidation as China increasingly asserts its territorial claims in the South China Sea with new naval power. The trend towards modernization in East Asia is spawning new military capabilities of credible power projection, and the region is becoming a cauldron simmering with strategic management challenges. In the words of Arthur Friedberg: "In the long run, it is Asia that seems far more likely [vis-à-vis Europe] to be the cockpit of great power conflict"<sup>13</sup>

### **III. THE FADING AGE OF COLONIALISM**

For almost five hundred years, European colonial powers coveted Asia for its seemingly inexhaustible supply of natural resources and geo-strategic choke points. Asian maps have been accustomed to the congestion of colonial markers. Britain was deeply involved in Hong Kong, Malaya/Singapore, Burma and India; The Netherlands and Portugal postured continuously from Sumatra to New Guinea; France planted roots in

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<sup>12</sup> Bracken, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Schwarz, 3.

Indochina; the Philippines saw two foreign powers, Spain and the United States administer its Islands. Both Japan and China had the interests of the United States forced upon them. Even among Asian nations, the region's vast natural wealth and ports proved too alluring: in 1939, the logistical paralysis of its stalled Chinese offensive compelled Japan to secure what it called "The Southern Resources Area" in Southeast Asia. Today, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country proudly claiming it has never been colonized.

Western powers began their Asian fade after World War II, in what Michael Mandelbaum has called one of the "three great bursts of state-creation."<sup>14</sup> Britain left India in 1947, fought a successful counterinsurgency in Malaya in the mid 1950s, but eventually left . It departed from Singapore in 1972, and returned Hong Kong to the PRC in July 1997. The United States returned the control of Okinawa to Japan in 1972, and in 1992, the American bases in the Philippines were closed. In 1999, Portugal returned Macau to China. Today, the last vestiges of colonial administration/Western rule have disappeared, and the nations of Asia raise their own flags each morning.

Western observers tend to have a strategic peripheral vision approximately 5 years either side of the present. Therefore, we see the West's departure from Asia as a momentary flash. Asians view time's flow with greater depth perception and patience, and thus see the colonial retreat as a contemporary, yet inevitable culmination of a process that has been maturing since its birth hundreds of years ago. Despite its resilient façade, colonial occupation has always been an extremely thin and forced

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<sup>14</sup> Micheal Mandelbaum, "*The Future of Nationalism*", The National Interest, Fall, 18.

economic/political penetration: the Chinese, as discussed later in this paper, still view the forced presence of foreigners in their country as a humiliating scourge; and even America's deepest engagement in Asia, MacArthur's reconstruction of post-war Japan from 1945-1952 (which may well be described as neo-colonial rule), could not transcend the polarity of two cultures whose only common denominator was the war time experience. Today, with its colonial penetration having been erased, the West is seeing a new phenomenon that reflects back a half of a millennium: Asia is becoming "Asian" again.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **WHY GO BALLISTIC?**

#### **(The Appeal of Asymmetry)**

The previous chapter emphasized the slow, persistent growth of emerging Asian economies, and fading Western colonial influence as the two most potent forces changing the distribution of political and military power in East Asia. American interpretations of Post Cold War Asia have ignored the depths of these forces and the complexities they have created. A typically American explanation for the new face of Asia, based on simplicity, has deluded U.S. policy makers, and East Asia has begun to tear away the status quo the United States wishes to preserve. Traditional Asian rivalries are resurfacing, national industrial infrastructures are being modernized, and military forces are being restructured. Assuming present growth trends, the region is destined for dramatic change, and in 15-20 years shall be vastly different to the one seen today.

As all of these changes are taking form, they are slowly pushing American influence further and further towards the strategic margins. However, America's last true symbol of influence in East Asia remains its most compelling: the 100,000 plus forward-based forces stationed in Japan and Korea represent America's superior global military capabilities.<sup>15</sup> The U.S. military protectorate is, and shall be for at least the next ten-fifteen years, the only force truly capable of global/regional power projection and

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<sup>15</sup> Major U.S. Commands in East Asia: 8th Army and 7th Air Force in South Korea (ROK), 5th Air Force and 7th Fleet in mainland Japan, III Marine Expeditionary Force in Okinawa and mainland Japan.

precision strike in East Asia. The key regional players are acutely aware of the disparity, and they all understand that acquiring modern fighting forces capable of power projection requires a long term investment strategy.

China last faced this unpleasant inequity during the March 1996 crisis in the Straits of Taiwan, when two U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups were dispatched to the Straits after the Chinese fired M9 ballistic missiles near Taiwan's major ports. The Chinese were furious at what they saw as another American interference in an internal Chinese affair. However, the fact remained, they were unable to credibly threaten the U.S. carrier groups:

We realized that if China's military was to face off against the United States, we would not be sufficient [...] So we realized that China needs a new strategy to right the balance of power [...] we are a weak country, so do we need to fight according to your rules? No. War has rules, but those rules are Western rules, if you use those rules, then weak countries have no chance.<sup>16</sup>

Although the context of this quote was a discussion of the writings of two Chinese colonels who were theorizing on the use of deeply asymmetric tactics such as terrorism, drug trafficking, environmental degradation, etc., *the feeling of powerlessness conveyed in the quote is supremely representative of the dilemma facing all of East Asia as it undertakes economic and military modernization.* How do relatively weak countries like China and North Korea face up to the United States? How should modernization be structured to face the U.S. threat in 20 years? What interim fixes might balance the scales for the immediate future?

These questions underscore a mindset of recognized inferiority, and their answers can be found in the wonderfully Asian thought patterns of Sun Tzu: enemies must adapt

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<sup>16</sup> John Pomfret, "China Ponders New Rules of 'Unrestricted War'", Washington Post, 8 August 1999, Sec A.

to maximize strength and minimize weakness. Western thoughts on the struggle illuminate the polarity of the two perspectives:

The Nation's [United States'] great capability in high technology power projection forces may lead future opponents to devise "asymmetric" counters or stratagems to frustrate, if not defeat, the U.S. military advantages [...] Put simply, asymmetric threats or techniques are a version of "not fighting fair"<sup>17</sup>

Is asymmetry an adaptation to maximize strength, or a game plan of not fighting fairly?

The answer depends entirely on which side of the fence your property lies. Asymmetry's appeal is evident in that, when cleverly applied, it allows a nation to do more with less.

Given the fact that the United States should not expect a global peer with conventional power projection capabilities until approximately 2020-25, it should accept not only Asian, but also world wide asymmetric stratagems as a fact of life until that time.

Although the two countries have developed and deployed ballistic missiles out of vastly different and unique national contexts, both China and North Korea have these weapons as their touchstone asymmetric technology. The remainder of this chapter examines why the ballistic missile offers such a tremendous asymmetric appeal to these nations, and discusses what role ballistic missiles may play in the realization of China's and North Korea's strategic goals.

## **I. CHINA: PERCEPTIONS**

As the world's emerging great power, China is a nation in search of definition. The quest for definition in its regional and global roles has elicited some very interesting comments from its Asian neighbors that are significant and worth examining.

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<sup>17</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, "*Strategic Assessment 1998, Flashpoints and Force Structure*", Ed. Patrick Clawson, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997) p.169

Asian strategic opinions of China evoke in the American mind the elemental themes of Rip Van Winkle's folk tale: sleep, awakening, and change. These fundamental images have transfixed the strategic psyche of the region, and there is strong sense of a "strategic hiatus" that shall eventually change as China strengthens the elements of its national power with economic growth:

As Napoleon said, "If China is a sleeping giant, don't wake it up." Now it has awakened, but it [has] not got going yet, it is just, you know, doing morning exercises, a bit of *qigong* or *taijiquan*. You reach noontime, when it is completely at the peak of its power, that's a big problem.<sup>18</sup>

China has slept for a long time under a soporific ideology. Now it is waking up [...] China is merely living up to historical expectations that being such a big country, it would not fail to flex its muscles.<sup>19</sup>

Compare this thematic sense of awakening to the Chinese self-image of the underdog, of a nation backward and weak, of the feelings of victimization and humiliation (especially in regard to territorial issues), and the burning desires to restore past glory.<sup>20</sup>

LtGen. Li Jijun best captures this acute bitterness:

Over the past 150 years, however, China has been the victim of repeated aggression and pillages [...] Before 1949, when the People's Republic was established, more than 1000 treaties and agreements, most of which were unequal in their terms, were forced on China by the Western powers. [...] This was a period of humiliation that the Chinese people can never forget. This is why the people of China show such strong emotions in matters concerning our national independence, unity, integrity of territory, and sovereignty. This is also why the Chinese are so determined to safeguard them under any circumstances and at all costs.<sup>21</sup>

The experiences of the Opium War (1840-42), when China was carved into foreign concession areas, and the brutal Japanese occupation beginning in 1930, were unforgettable and shameful to Chinese, and help to explain why China still describes herself as a nation emerging from "semi-colonial domination".<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Storey, *Parameters*, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Storey, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 105.

<sup>20</sup> Jing-Dong Yaun, "Studying Chinese Security Policy: Toward An Analytical Framework", *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 13, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1999), 148.

<sup>21</sup> Lieutenant General Li Jijun, "Traditional Military Thinking And The Defensive Strategy Of China", Address to the United States War College, August 29, 1997.

<sup>22</sup> *Countering the Missile Threat, International Military Strategies*, Ed. Jim Colbert, Jewish Institute for national Security Affairs (JINSA): Washington, DC, 1999, 201.

These feelings are very real for the Chinese, and to fathom the depths to which they affect the national psyche allows one to understand how profoundly irredentism guides Chinese national strategy. The Chinese territorial claims in the East and South China Seas, the concept of the Chinese “offshore active defense”<sup>23</sup>, the elation over the return of Hong Kong and Macau, and the vitriolic stance on Taiwan’s status as a Chinese province all point to a consistent irredentist priority in strategic thought: to recover lost lands and to safeguard China’s national territory and sovereignty.

China’s fascination with the ballistic missile is inextricably bound to its heartfelt vision of the missile as a talisman that finally slipped the nation free of the bonds of foreign domination. After more than a century of humiliation, a “magic”<sup>24</sup> technology materialized in the late 1950s, and a nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) strike capability became China’s ultimate hedge against foreign powers. Missiles offered the Chinese a previously unknown freedom from fear of psychological dominance, and alleviated some of the panic generated by the perceived vulnerability from conventionally and technologically superior foes. From the day when they first inducted it as a weapons system in the Chinese arsenal, China’s leaders saw the ballistic missile as a hallmark charm that could raise the nation’s self-image, and make superpower status possible.

It is not hard to see how this perception materialized: as China deployed its first nuclear ICBMs, Mao’s army was still a massive, backward, peasant institution best used to police the state. Despite the army’s incredible size, it still could not offer sanctuary from Western dominance. Ballistic missiles assisted in changing that; and this is one

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<sup>23</sup> Gregor, 6.

<sup>24</sup> The Jewish Institute for Strategic Studies: “*Countering the Missile Threat, International Military Strategies*”, ed. Jim Colbert, Washington DC: JINSA. 191.



reason why China has had such a fascination and love affair with them. Beijing may always see a linkage between missiles and foreign domination, and China may always see ballistic missiles as great equalizers that shall help nullify Western military superiority. In today's strategic climate, which may be increasingly characterized by limited, regional conflicts such as the Gulf War, the Chinese still feel vulnerable. For these reasons, China will most likely continue to build and improve both its strategic and theater missile inventories while it modernizes its conventional forces. Missiles have allowed the Chinese to do more with less, and until the PLA has reached conventional offensive power projection parity with Western armies, the ballistic missile may be China's asymmetric weapon of choice.

The most compelling evidence supporting this prediction lies on China's side of the Taiwan Strait, where the Chinese are deploying short-range ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan from at least two bases. These missile bases afford Beijing a capability to target "all of Taiwan's major military bases"<sup>25</sup>, in addition to most of the major Taiwanese ports and financial hubs. The best DIA estimates now put the number of operable missiles at 40, with an additional 100 missiles being inducted each year, for an estimated total of almost 500 by the year 2005. The goal is to be able to overwhelm any Taiwanese missile defense system with sheer volume. The logic is understandable. The PLA's conventional capacity to assault Taiwan from across the Strait (commonly referred to as the "million-man swim") shall not be immediately forthcoming. The eventual reunification of Taiwan

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<sup>25</sup> Bill Gertz, "Beijing Targets Taiwan with a Second Base", The Washington Times, 8 December, 1999. A1. The two bases, Yong'an and Xianyou, are located in the provinces of Jiangxi and Fujian, and are located 220 miles and 135 miles, respectively, from Taiwan's western coast. The missile of choice at both of these bases is China's cheapest, most available tool, the CSS-6/CSS-7 or M9/M11, which have nuclear capable warheads and an approximate range of 180/360 nautical miles.

with the PRC is one issue on which the Chinese leadership is highly unlikely to compromise, and China has consciously elected to use missiles as its interim offensive capability to manipulate and influence its desires for Taiwan's future. In this regard, the Chinese are using ballistic missiles as political weapons of fear and intimidation. The goal is to reach an overwhelming level of psychological dominance, and then negotiate with the United States and Taipei from a position power. It is a page out of Sun Tzu's playbook: "Those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle. They capture his cities without assaulting them and overthrow his state without protracted operations."<sup>26</sup> The methodology resonates with asymmetry, and relies upon the images of mass casualties to instill fear and shock. The fluctuations in Asian stock markets (the Hong Kong Index fell almost 7.3 percent in one day), and the exodus of almost \$20 billion US from Taiwan during the March 1996 Straits crisis are vivid reminders of the ballistic missile's psychological potency. These events are disturbing reminders of the potential turmoil that the employment of dozens of missiles might create: an apoplectic fear exponentially more intense than that which gripped Tel Aviv during the Gulf War in 1991.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Translated by Samuel B. Griffith, (New York: Oxford University Press) 79.

<sup>27</sup> Numerous sources (CDISS, JINSA, Gregor, Washington Post, et alia) form the consensus opinion that the Chinese were prepared to shoot between 20-30 DF-15s during the March 1996 crisis.

## II. CHINA'S MISSILE FORCE

China's ballistic missile program is the oldest and most advanced in Asia. The research and development began in 1958 with the Dong Feng (East Wind) program, and was based on Russian technology. That program, which had its first successful launch in 1965, was the patriarch of today's arsenal, which consists of the 12 systems outlined below:<sup>28</sup>

System	Alternative Name	Missile Type	Quantity	Max Range (KM)	CEP <sup>29</sup> (Meters)	Payload	Status
CSS-2	DF-3/3A	IRBM	150-200/50-60	2,600	2,000	1-3mt	IS*
CSS-3	DF-4	IRBM	20-35	4,750	1500	2 mt	IS
CSS-4	DF-5/5A	ICBM	15-20	13,000	500	3-4mt	IS
CSS-5	DF-21	MRBM	35-50	2,200	700	250kt	IS
CSS-6	DF-15/M-9	SRBM	150-400	600	300	90kt	IS
CSS-7	DF-11/M-11	SRBM	200	280	600	90kt	IS
CSS-8	M-7	SRBM		160	-	190kt	IS
CSS-N3	JL-1	SLBM		1,700	-	2mt	IS
DF-25		MRBM		1,700	-	2mt	R&D
DF-31		ICBM		8,000	-	2mt	Tested
DF-41		ICBM		12,000	-	MIRV?	R&D
JL-2		SLBM		8,000	-	2mt	Tested

\*IS=In Service. M-9 & M-11 are the export models of the DF-15 & DF-11, respectively. All of the missiles have nuclear, chemical or high-explosive warhead capabilities.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> UNCLASSIFIED data compiled and cross-checked from two sources: Centre for Defense and International Security Studies, "Size of China's Ballistic Missile Force", Downloaded from: [www.cdiss.org/chinabms.htm](http://www.cdiss.org/chinabms.htm), and JINSA, 202.

<sup>29</sup> "CEP"=Circular Error of Probability. A measure of missile/ordnance accuracy: the radius of a circle centered on the target in which half of the missiles will fall. **Displayed CEPs do not reflect GPS installation/Radar Mapping Terminal Guidance currently being developed.**

<sup>30</sup> Estimates for China's nuclear warhead inventory display a tremendous variance, and depend on the source. A "baseline force" from six-year old sources (1994 Nuclear Data Handbook and Arms Control Today) puts the number at 300, of which 134 are ballistic missile warheads, and 150 are designed for air deliverable bombs. Of the 134 missile warheads, 110 are land-based, and 24 are sea-based submarine launched (SLBMs). The sea-based warheads could be launched from China's one Xia-class nuclear powered submarine, which is armed with twelve CSS-N-3 (JL-1) missiles. Other warhead estimates from "Jane's" have put the number of warheads at over 1400. Despite the wide range of these estimates, all the sources seem to agree upon the number of **fielded and operable strategic** (ICBM) delivery systems: 17-20 DF-5/5A ICBMs, which all carry a **single** 4-5 megaton warhead. It is not believed that China currently deploys ANY missiles with a multiple, independently-targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs).

The table reveals an interesting trend: the Chinese ballistic missile inventory is most heavily weighted with short-to intermediate range systems, presumably for employment in local/regional conflicts, such as Taiwan. This indicates that Chinese planners may be convinced of the efficacy of a short-medium range ballistic missile force armed with conventional, high-explosive warheads. The Chinese were apparently quite impressed by the political and psychological effects caused by Iraqi SCUDS during the Gulf War. These impressions, combined with the historical Chinese affectation for ballistic missiles, are providing China's war planners an asymmetric warfighting dimension that may allow them to intimidate, deter and fight without having to cross the nuclear threshold. Unfortunately, the greatest gap in US intelligence regarding China's missile force (and perhaps the most disturbing, given China's willingness to use it) is the lack of accurate estimates on the size of the short-medium range inventory. Approximately 500 DF-15 are expected by 2005-10; and, a recent DOD study puts the total number of operable, conventionally armed missiles in the year 2010 at 2,000.<sup>31</sup> These estimates, and the evidence of continued missile base construction are key indicators that ballistic missile systems shall remain key elements of China's national military strategy for the next 10-15 years.

### **III. THE PRIORITIES OF MODERNIZATION.**

Since 1979, when Deng Xiaoping first announced his "Four Modernizations", China has sustained phenomenal economic growth, averaging over nine percent per year. The country's GNP has more than tripled, and the International Monetary Fund's purchasing power parity (PPP) indicator puts China as the third largest economy in the

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<sup>31</sup> CDISS, 3.

world, with a credible ability to reach parity with Japan, and even the United States in the next twenty years.<sup>32</sup> This impressive growth, with its accompanied rise in the standard of living, has become the cornerstone of the Communist party's legitimacy. In this context, Chinese domestic policy for the next 15 years will most likely emphasize and construct economic reforms perceived as having the capacity enhance and sustain this remarkable growth. The correlation between economic growth and party legitimacy veils a competition of visions as to why and how economic growth shall benefit China:

While some radical reformers and business elites may regard economic development as primarily intended to create a prosperous and stable society, other leadership groups, especially among the military and more conservative elements of the party and state bureaucracy, almost certainly view it as critical to the attainment of China's national defense and great-power status.<sup>33</sup>

China's July 1998 Defense White Paper seems to articulate the official opinion that while economic security is an important aspect of state security, China's military modernization is also inextricably linked to its key elements of national power. Despite having the last priority of Xiaoping's Four Modernizations, the modernization of the PLA seems to have retained an appeal and sense of urgency due to the tremendous nationalist sentiment and pride its images evokes.

The 1979 defeat of the PLA in China's war with Vietnam created the first major impetus to restructure and improve the PLA, which was then still a massive, Maoist army geared towards nation building and political indoctrination/security. By 1985, China began adopting both a new strategic vision and military doctrine for the PLA. The focus shift was away from a major nuclear conflict and towards regional disputes with conventional weapons. All subsequent force structure, equipment procurement and doctrine would be predicated on regional territorial/maritime disputes. The PLA Navy

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<sup>32</sup> Yuan, 136.

<sup>33</sup> Swaine, 83-84.

(PLAN) was appropriately relieved of planning for supporting land operations against the Soviet Union, and tasked with the mission(s) to prepare for the conduct of war at sea and an “offshore active defense”.<sup>34</sup> The limits/boundaries of the new maritime strategy, depicted below as the “First and Second Island Chains”, are logical extrapolations of China’s relentless and enduring ambition to protect its territorial bounds, and they reflect the recent Chinese popularization of the “sea as motherland”.<sup>35</sup>



<sup>34</sup> Gregor, 2. Active Offshore Defense is another term for "Active Peripheral Defense", which has been thus defined: "The defense of territorial and strategic frontiers exercised for anti-attack purposes [not excluding the possibility of] offshore strikes for self defense or for offense after a period of defense" (Michael D. Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking*, Santa Monica: Rand, 1998, 9.)

<sup>35</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, "Strategic Assessment 1999", ed. Hans Binnendijk, Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999, 130.

Contextually, China's intense feelings of national inferiority provide a framework for interpreting the PLA's modernization as a vision of new military interests and missions that shall help build China "into a power of regional predominance and global status",<sup>36</sup> and not as a reaction to an immediate or perceived threat. When extrapolated over a period of 10-25 years, Chinese defense policy, which is largely the domain of the PLA, should be seen as a phased, two-tier plan. The short-medium goal is to increase the efficacy of military power as an instrument of foreign policy, and the long term aspirations are for global power projection, extended territorial defense and great-power status.

Despite ten years of consecutive double-digit percentage increases in military modernization spending, China still has severe conventional global power projection disparities with the United States, and shall continue to remain in lag for the next 15-25 years. Recent acquisitions of such modern systems as the SU-27 Flanker, airborne warning and control systems and the construction of another Xia-class submarine, may add an interim air of credibility, but they do not deeply strengthen China's force projection capability. The Chinese SU-27, while an excellent airframe, still only carries the "short-burn" AA-10 Alamo radar missile, and the PLAAF lacks adequate air refueling assets to support the FLANKER for airborne sortie generation/increased "on-station" time.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the major end items for the PLAN (an aircraft carrier, logistical support vessels, etc) are still years away from becoming a reality.

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<sup>36</sup> Yuan, 143.

<sup>37</sup> There has great mention by many sources of the Chinese SU-27 (Russian export model). The aircraft carries the AA-10 Alamo, a radar guided missile with a range slightly less than that of the U.S. produced AIM-7 Sparrow. While the Taiwanese F-16's purchased from the United States, are not "radar-shooters" (Read: Aim-9 Sidewinder heat seeking missiles only), the SU-27's "SLOT-BACK" radar has serious limitations. A properly trained F-16 pilot could easily defeat an AA-10 missile fired by a FLANKER from Beyond Visual Range (BVR), and subsequently engage the SU-27 in the visual arena. If the Chinese were

The images of the rapid U.S. victory in the 1991 Gulf War served as a crude wake up call, reminding China of its need for continued military modernization and doctrinal revision. One Chinese officer observed that his nation's military thinkers were particularly upset over the swift Iraqi rout because, in his words, "the Iraqi defense was planned in complete harmony with our doctrinal template for the defense."<sup>38</sup> For China, the Gulf War was an event that affirmed the legitimacy of high technology's migration to the modern battlefield:

A profound reform in the military field, led by the development of high-tech weapons is taking place throughout the world. This reform, which is developing rapidly, will exert an important and profound influence on weaponry, military system and setup, combat training and military theory [...] [China] seeks to adapt to profound changes in the world's military sphere, and makes proper preparations for defensive combat in the situation where modern technology, especially high technology, prevails.<sup>39</sup>

Chinese strategists view the advent of new weapons capable of greater lethality and mass destruction as "a major, important revolution in military technology (junshu jishu geming) that transformed war."<sup>40</sup> Western analysts would apply the term "Revolution in Military Affairs" to describe how these weapons and their high technology alter the character of war. However, semantics are not the issue here; the fundamental issue is that "high technology" now resides in the PLA's doctrinal lexicon. The PLA understands the urgency to adopt and integrate modern commercial technology to its military applications. The timeframe of this integration defines a period of critical transformation,

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able to obtain the "long-burn" ALAMO (AA-10C) missiles and adequate airborne tanking assets for the FLANKER, this equation would be radically altered, and might only be evened with the sale of AMRAAM 120 missiles to Taiwan. The current Chinese SU-27 inventory has about 50 aircraft, with a contract, which expires in 3 months, for the Chinese to co-produce about 200 more with Russia. (Unclassified, author's professional opinion.)

<sup>38</sup> Major D. Shults, United States Army. East Asia Foreign Area Officer. Presentations delivered to The United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, Va. 12 February and 2 March 2000.

<sup>39</sup> White Paper 1998, 2.



similar to a snake's molting period, when the snake sheds its skin. Due to its abysmal condition from the start of its restructuring in 1979, and the fact that its technologies will continue to "lag" behind Western military technologies, the PLA, despite having military "pockets of excellence", shall not fulfill its vision of conventional military parity with the United States until approximately 2020-2025. This long interim period of lag is another reason why the ballistic missile holds such appeal: it helps to even the scales, and "buy" time for China to continue to modernize while hopefully avoiding a large scale conventional war. It's both interesting and significant that both the 1995 and 1998 Defense White Papers have no mention of any planned reductions in China's ballistic missile systems. In fact, China continues to increase the lethality of many of its extant missile systems, as well as increase the research and development efforts for new ones.

#### **IV. MODERNIZING THE MISSILE FORCE**

China's current ICBM R&D focuses on the DF-31 and DF-41. Both systems are solid fuelled, three stage missiles representing serious advances in technical capabilities. The unsettling feature of each missile is the incorporation of a MIRV warhead, not seen on earlier systems. Additionally, the DF-31 may include "penetration aids" such as chaff, decoys, etc. to aid in confusing missile defense systems. These two missiles, when successfully produced and deployed, shall give the Chinese a capability with very similar design characteristics to current generation Russian missiles.<sup>41</sup>

The focus of the SRBM-MRBM improvement program has been the guidance systems of the DF-15 and DF-21. The technologies that shall significantly improve

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<sup>40</sup> JINSA, 192.

<sup>41</sup> CDISS, 4.

missile CEP are GPS guidance and terminal flight radar ground mapping. These advances could reduce CEPs from triple digits to double digits, with low/accurate end estimates of 50 meters. Such accuracy would undoubtedly change the way in which the missile threat is perceived, and stands as a quantum leap from the accuracy of Iraqi SCUDS launched during the Gulf War that, more often than not, fell miles off-target.

Benefiting from stolen, purchased and developed technologies, China's scientists shall continue to improve their ballistic missile systems' accuracy, survivability, and lethality. The focus shall remain on developing more intimidating ICBMs, and on producing AND deploying large numbers of precision guided short-medium range ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear/WMD warheads, but most likely armed with conventional, high-explosive warheads. Due to the extended timeline the China faces in "upgrading" its army, the PLA's place in modernity still remains decades away. For this very reason (which is emerging as a reality of varying intensity throughout Asia), the ballistic missile has the potential to become the Asian operational equivalent of the Kalishnikov in the early 21st century.

## **V. SINO/US RELATIONS**

Since Mao Zedong's 1958 Great Leap Forward and the subsequent Sino-Soviet split, fourteen years passed before the United States and China seriously opened a diplomatic rhetoric. Irony and pragmatism became strange bedfellows on 21 February 1972, when Richard Nixon walked down the ladder of Air Force One and shook hands with the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai. The debilitating war in Vietnam and the pressures of the Cold War had finally compelled the United States to seek formal diplomatic ties with China. Thus began a reverberating game of *realpolitik*, in which President Nixon

hoped to hedge his position in Vietnam by simultaneously undermining Hanoi via Beijing, and presenting the Soviet Union with the strategic dilemma of a U.S./Beijing alliance. It was a momentous affair that forged the template guiding U.S. China policy for over two decades. Nixon understood China's potential as a strategic fulcrum for opposing "hegemony", i.e., the Soviet Union. His legacy pervaded U.S. China policy for 20 years: presidential administrations from Nixon to Reagan held close the belief that confronting and confounding the Russians meant seeking improved relations with the Chinese communists in Beijing.<sup>42</sup> The technique was pragmatic, and focused on the concept of strategic partnership. That has changed, and despite the current U.S. administration's claims to the contrary, today both the U.S. and China struggle to understand the evolving dynamic surrounding their relationship.

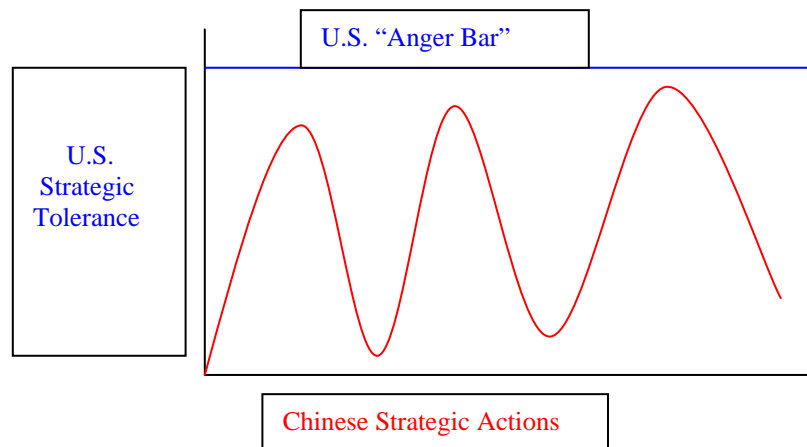
The United States Department of State echoes President Clinton's policy of "building a constructive, strategic partnership", and still holds dear the precepts set forth in the Shanghai Communiqué of 27 February 1972.<sup>43</sup> The acceptance of Taiwan's unique

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<sup>42</sup> Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China, An Investigative History*, (New York: Perseus Books 1999) 37.

<sup>43</sup> David Sedney, United States Department of State, "U.S. and China: Building a Constructive, Strategic Partnership" (Quantico, Va: Lecture presented to the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College). Mr. Sedney, while addressing a question regarding why the State Department supports a seemingly schizophrenic position on Taiwan, responded by quoting the opening lines of the communique's paragraph fourteen: "The U.S. side declared: The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position." A discussion of Taiwan's relations with the United States could form the topic of another paper entirely. But Taiwan's story is one of amazing endurance. It has, over the years, despite severe diplomatic setbacks (the loss of its UN seat in 1971, the severing of its diplomatic relations with the U.S. in January 1979), successfully mustered powerful support in the U.S. Congress. To maintain this support, the Taiwanese government relies heavily on its democratic appeal, which it continually cultivates via lavish ceremony and interaction with influential U.S. politicians. By the time Bill Clinton ran for President in 1992, he had never visited China. Yet he had visited Taiwan four times as the head of an Arkansas trade delegation. (Tyler, 10.) Taiwan's lobby effort is, in the words of one lobbyist "the most smoothly and impressively run lobbying machine on Capitol Hill." (Interview on 7 January, 2000 with Ms. Christina Tellalian, Manager, Government & Public Affairs, Sony Electronics). The recent U.S. House of Representatives (1 February 2000) vote of 341-70 in favor of the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act attests to Taiwan's close relationship with the United States, and to a general feeling that the current White House policy towards China is "photogenic but vacuous".

status in the communiqué formed the U.S. “One China” policy. China’s creeping assertiveness in the South China Sea, its virulent reaction to the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, its actions before and during the 1996 Straits of Taiwan crisis, and its subsequent/continuous deployment of ballistic missiles targeted against Taiwan do not seem like the actions of a strategic partner. They suggest rather, that China perceives the United States as a strategic obstacle. In responding to all of the above challenges, the current U.S. administration has been reflexive, unpredictable, opaque, and without a sense of strategic realism.<sup>44</sup> The current U.S. policy lacks clarity, and the way in which it muddies an already murky situation can lead to dangerous miscalculations. One Chinese officer explained his country’s search for clearly defined U.S. strategic parameters in terms of a graphic sketch similar to the one below:



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<sup>44</sup> Peter T.R. Brooks, “*The Future of U.S.-Sino Security Relations*”, Strategic Review, Summer 1999, 54.

Chinese strategic actions are represented by the curve of varying amplitude. China wishes to incrementally increase the curve's amplitude until it is tangential to the horizontal line (the "Anger Bar"), representing the limit of U.S. tolerance. However, because of the ambiguous U.S. China policy, the Chinese find the position of the Anger Bar extremely difficult to estimate.<sup>45</sup>

Scholars of international relations often stress that strategic ambiguity is a healthy, necessary ingredient of foreign policy. While the construct of the Taiwan Relations Act deliberately cast a strategic haze over the issue of Taiwanese independence, there was really no doubt about the commitment of past U.S. administrations to forcefully defend the island's "sovereignty" had the PLA invaded. During the current presidency, Beijing has seemingly been signaled that the U.S. cares about little except trade: White House rhetoric over human rights in China, the issue of Tibet, and nuclear and missile nonproliferation seems designed as a culturally acceptable tonic for Congress and the U.S. public. There may be a growing Chinese assumption that if China steps up its intimidation of Taiwan, the United States may not intervene during an actual invasion. It seems as if the strategic ambiguity that prevails today is very real, and very dangerous.

## **VI. NORTH KOREA**

Spanning 125 miles of the Korean Peninsula, the North/South Korean border, remains the last frontier of the Cold War. Since the end of the Korean War, the world

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<sup>45</sup> Major General Robert Scales, USA, Comments presented at the Marine Corps University Foundation Conference: "*Strategy in the Twenty-First Century*", 26 October, 1999, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff, Quantico, Va.

has become accustomed to a divided Korea, and in that context, the Peninsula has seen little substantive change, seemingly being frozen in time. At present, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel is the world's most heavily militarized border: each day, 1.1 million North Korean troops face over 660,000 South Korean (ROK) and 37,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines.

On opposite sides of that parallel, the two Koreas have experienced vastly different fortunes: South Korea's economy, despite setbacks from the 1997 Asian financial crisis, remains among the world's top fifteen, and the nation has evolved from military rule into a democratic political system. Merely a few miles north of Seoul, North Korea (The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK), ruled by Kim Il Sung and, since 1994, his son Kim Jong Il, has remained a nation shrouded in secrecy and afflicted by decline for more than forty-six years. Today, by most measurable standards, North Korea is a state on the brink of collapse: with its economy in an apparent state of free-fall (from 1990-1997, North Korea's economic contraction averaged almost 4.8 percent<sup>46</sup>), the state is virtually unable to meet the basic needs of its citizens. Bereft of vital support from both Russia and China, North Korea's "defining imperative is no longer to present itself as an alternative model for Korean unification, but to arrest its internal decline and avoid extinction as a political, economic, and social system: state survival has suspended all other national goals."<sup>47</sup> Despite facing eight consecutive years of economic decline, food shortages, declining/aging weaponry, and falling industrial capacity, North Korea still devotes almost 25 percent of its shrinking GNP to military

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<sup>46</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee. *"Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications"*. Santa Monica: RAND, 1999, 33.

<sup>47</sup> Pollack and Lee. 1.

programs. Kim Jong Il is selling his legitimacy and justifying the incredible hardships placed upon the populace by popularizing a caustic campaign of nationalism aimed primarily against the United States.

The depth and degree of North Korean decline has attracted a great deal of attention to the prospects of Korean unification. Anticipating a reunification scenario is not within in the realm of this essay. However, the character of North Korea's military threat has been transformed by the severe long-term economic decline Pyongyang has experienced, and needs to be addressed.

North Korea's intensely secretive "society" has caused most analysts to describe its internal political situation as "opaque". Some voices in the State Department attribute the most accurate information on developments in North Korea to the many North Korean refugees passing through the U.S. mission/consulate at Shen Yang, in Manchuria.<sup>48</sup> Despite the translucent nature of U.S. intelligence, one development seems to be certain: North Korea poses a much different military threat today than it did during the Cold War. Today's North Korean threat has materialized as the willingness for an increased exploitation of weapons of mass destruction. With the loss of a substantial amount of Chinese and Russian economic aid, Pyonyang has sought to maximize its strategic options via robust ballistic missile, WMD, and nuclear programs. Ballistic missiles and nuclear technology are used as sources of political and economic leverage, and as key force multipliers. North Korea, so far, seems to be correctly assessing the political harvest these programs can reap. The most recent examples of U.S. engagement with North Korea have been prompted by nuclear and ballistic missile issues: the establishment of the Agreed Framework in 1994, and the Korean Peninsula Energy

Development Organization (KEDO) in 1995 were attempts “to negotiate an overall resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula”<sup>49</sup>, while the 1996 bilateral talks on missile proliferation were convened in response to a growing concern over North Korea’s ballistic missile development and proliferation activities.

## **VII. NORTH KOREA’S MISSILE FORCE**

North Korea’s ballistic missile force is substantially younger and less advanced than China’s, and is based primarily on Scud technology. Initial R & D with the Chinese began in the mid 1970s, but was eventually terminated before the Koreans had an indigenous production capability. In 1981, North Korea obtained Scud Bs from Egypt. Within three years, Korean scientists reverse-engineered the Egyptian system, and the first Korean-built SCUD was launched in 1984. This system became the first generation export model for North Korean missiles, and Pyongyang actively sought customers, selling Scuds and Scud technology to Iran, Egypt, and Syria. By 1991, a Scud C had been developed, and was again being sold throughout the Mid East. The rigorous sales of the Scud C abroad established North Korea as a major ballistic missile proliferator.

The No Dong missile system (named after the town near which it was first detected in 1992), while being a derivative of Scud technology, represents a step beyond Scud capabilities. The No Dong 2, having a cluster of four Scud B engines, has a range of almost three times that of the Scud C (allowing North Korea to target major cities in Japan, to include Kyoto), and is guided by a gyroscopic inertial navigation system. It is believed that GPS shall soon be integrated into the No Dong guidance and targeting systems. North Korea has continued its pattern of missile exportation and sales with the

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Mr. Alan Langland, United States Department of State, 15 February, 2000.



No Dong 1, and Iran is one of the first buyers of the technology. The renamed the missile (the Shahab 3), is creating serious security concerns in the Mid East.

North Korea's most advanced missile project, the Taepo Dong series, is still in the R & D phase. Its technology is a combination of Scud and Chinese-sourced M-11 designs. The North Koreans still have significant technological obstacles to breach before this missile is operational, but its design development and potential capabilities are alarming. The Taepo Dong represents a *considerable* advance over the Scud-based No Dong series: from North Korea, targets in Alaska and in the Hawaiian Islands could be at risk, as well as the major European capitals, should Iran and other regimes in the Mid East acquire the missile.

A summary of the North Korea's current missile capability is presented in the following table:<sup>50</sup>

System	Missile Type	Quantity	Max Range (KM)	CEP (Meters)	Deployment Date
Scud B	SRBM	120-? *	320	500	1984-85
Scud C	SRBM	180-? *	550	500	1988-89
Nodong 1	MRBM	20**	1,000-1,300	700	1997
Nodong 2	MRBM	?	1,500	800 (Est)	
Taepo Dong 1	MRBM		2,000 (Est)	Unkwn	R & D***
Taepo Dong 2	IRBM		4,000-6,000	Unkwn	R & D

\* Otherwise known as the Hwasong (Mars) 5 and 6. Total quantities of North Korean Scuds are extremely difficult to estimate. Public (unclassified) sources estimate the baseline force at between 300-500 total Scuds, with an additional 370-400 having been exported. The Scud B and C are capable of chemical warhead delivery.

\*\* South Korean and Chinese sources have corroborated that the No Dong series is capable of delivering either a 50 kiloton nuclear warhead or nerve gas.

\*\*\*The first launch of the Taepo Dong series received great attention when North Korea launched the missile over Japan on 31 August 1998.

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<sup>49</sup> Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Geneva, Switzerland, 21 October 1994, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Unclassified sources: JINSA, 3. CDISS, "North Korea National Briefing", p.1-6.

The deployment of the No Dong and Taepo Dong series represents a significant regional threat to Asia, and may add a sense of prestige of Kim Jong Il's regime. The capabilities of the Scud B and C series allow Pyongyang to target all of South Korea, so the newer missiles do not significantly alter the military threat to the South. A 1979 memorandum signed by South Korea and the U.S. limited South Korea's ballistic missile ranges to less than 180 kilometers. The U.S. assured South Korea that it would offset the ballistic missile range delta by defending the ROK with the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The ranges of the Scud B and C have greatly agitated the South Koreans, especially since 1990, when the United States removed its nuclear arsenal from the Korean Peninsula. Today, the strictures of the 1979 Memorandum are still in effect, and South Korea *does not* have an indigenous missile defense system or missile production capability to match the North Korean threat. This remains a major source of contention between Seoul and Washington, since South Korea is determined to have a ballistic missile capability with a range of over 300 km, which would allow it to target most of North Korea.

### **VIII. COMPARISON OF NATIONAL CONTEXTS**

China and North Korea provide fascinating examples of two nations that have embraced ballistic missile development from completely polar national contexts. North Korea, as a state on the brink of disintegration, has correctly calculated that its provocative, unpredictable threat of the use of ballistic missiles and their WMD capabilities (*vis-à-vis* the deteriorating conventional forces) can compel the United States to recognize and engage its current regime. Kim Jong Il's struggle to retain a sense of legitimacy seems to pivot about his ability to elicit recognition from the United States. Unfortunately, the appearance to the world has been that engagement by the United

States has materialized largely as a response to negative North Korean overtures, and threats, resulting in what has been referred to as strategic blackmail. Despite a growing international opinion favoring engagement with North Korea, Pyongyang's intimidation and manipulation of the U.S. towards the bargaining table has been impelled by its asymmetric threats. A strategy of brinksmanship has worked well for Pyongyang: in what many call a classic example negative reinforcement, North Korea, being rewarded for easing crises of its own creation, has become the largest recipient of U.S. aid in Asia.

China is the world's emerging superpower. Despite remaining still years in the future, China's goals of economic and conventional military parity with the United States will eventually be realized. In the meantime, China shall continue to strengthen and modernize the elements of its national power, and it shall continue to cultivate the long relationship it has developed with the ballistic missile. The Chinese ballistic missile is far different from its North Korean counterpart, which appears to be a check-valve holding back the floodwaters of collapse. The Chinese missile is an accurate, credible conventional and non-conventional threat that has been fully integrated into the national security strategy. It has helped to elevate the nation into a nuclear power, and it has given the PLA a conventional capability that has frustrated and frightened Western politicians and military planners. Although both North Korea and China fully understand and appreciate the ballistic missile as a psychological lever, the Chinese have transcended the realm of intimidation by making the conventional use of their missiles a doctrinal reality. This transcendence is a superb example of why the Chinese have been referred to as

“missile savants”<sup>51</sup>, and why they hope their missile arsenal shall help to elevate them as a global military power.

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<sup>51</sup> John Pomfret, “China Warns of New Arms Race”, Washington Post, 11 November, 1999, A1.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Strategic Culture

Interpreting a nation's historical patterns in order to predict its future strategic behavior can lead to dangerous assumptions and miscalculations. However, the recognition that cultural legacies and culturally influenced ideas can be linked to a nation's behavior and strategic choice is useful, and should be incorporated into the interpretive process used for predicting how a nation (or its elites) views the use of force for political ends. Both North Korea and China appreciate the political leverage gained from a credible ballistic missile program. Both nations have recently used these weapons to elicit recognition from the United States, and both nations may employ ballistic missiles as an "initial volley" against the U.S. or its allies in future conflict. For these reasons, an examination of the available evidence suggesting a Chinese or North Korean "strategic culture" may assist in providing a predictive tool than can help forecast their use of force.<sup>52</sup>

Strategic culture has been defined as "the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a

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<sup>52</sup> Generally speaking, "Structural Realism" and "Neorealist theory" reject the strategic-cultural dimension of strategic choice. These constructs suggest that states facing similar external opportunities and constraints shall react in similar, i.e., **rational** ways: "*The range of strategic choices presented to and decided upon by decision elites can be explained mostly by so-called structural variables such as the nature of power distributions between states in the here and now, where these distributions are given their particular cast by geography, technology, and military capabilities. The decision by elites to choose from their range of options is framed generally by a calculation of national interest that is, for the most part, universal, or perhaps determined by organizational interests, but certainly not culturally specific. Any particular set of elites placed in a similar situation ought to make a similar choice.*" (Emphasis mine) (Alistair Iain Johnston, "Cultural Realism, Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History", Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. 3.) The United States has traditionally accented the precepts of structural realism and the role of rationalism in its international predictive models, thus an American tendency to ignore the effects of cultural bias in another nation's strategic decision matrices. America's notable lack of "clairvoyance" in this respect has often contributed to confusion and embarrassment in the conduct of its foreign policy, and underscores an American lack of cultural understanding abroad. For this very reason, a consideration of strategic culture seems appropriate.

military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it.”<sup>53</sup> Johnston broadens the definition: “ranked grand strategic preferences derived from central paradigmatic assumptions about the nature of conflict and the enemy, and collectively shared by decision makers.”<sup>54</sup> Strategic culture may thus be imagined as a system of symbols that describes the nature of the strategic threat, the nature of potential and actual adversaries, and the efficacy of the use of force in resolving conflict. Inherent to this system is the fundamental role that perception plays in constructing paradigmatic boundaries. Since a nation’s vision is often focused by its cultural prism, the effects of culturally inherited strategic perceptions upon national strategic preferences (while possibly subtle) should be recognized and understood with clarity and depth.

## **I. CHINA**

Studies of Sino-strategic culture have identified two distinct tendencies: The *parabellum*, realpolitik understanding of the nature of conflicts, adversaries and the use of force, and the Confucian-Mencian non-violent, defensive, accommodationist approach that emphasizes strategy over brute force.<sup>55</sup> The parabellum approach regards peaceful environments as ephemeral events, during which enemies are planning for attacks, while the Confucian-Mencian approach is more a reflection of the defensive nature of Sun Tzu’s writings. Johnston’s study of Ming-dynasty strategic decision-making identified a distinct Chinese tendency to stress violent solutions to security conflicts: while noncoercive means were used to confront a more powerful enemy, negotiations were

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<sup>53</sup> Yuan. 181.

<sup>54</sup> Johnston. x.

<sup>55</sup> Johnston, ix.

merely a device used for delaying action until the moment was right for attack. A study of eleven contemporary Chinese foreign-policy crises from 1950-1985 seems to vindicate this tendency: China “resorted to violence 72 percent of the time, far more often, proportionally, than any other major power in the twentieth century.”<sup>56</sup> However, Johnston rightly asserts that “none of this is to imply that contemporary China has inherited a predisposition to aggressive, offensive use of force.”<sup>57</sup> It does suggest though, that China has a low threshold of pain towards certain issues, and might, as its military capabilities improve, increase its tendency to be confrontational.

The studies of Chinese strategic choice seem to reveal an amalgamated strategic culture, from which the Chinese draw upon for national security policy. When the country appears strong and unified, the Confucian-Mencian tendency seems prevalent, otherwise, the realpolitik, *parabellum* views seem to dominate. Additionally, China has shown its tendency to become particularly bellicose when confronted with issues of territorial sovereignty, and the United States should remember this, particularly when engaging Beijing on the issue of Taiwan.

The global strategic environment is slowly evolving from a unipolar system to one of multipolarity. The lessons of history and scholarship suggest that such an environment will inevitably compel potential great powers, such as China, to increase their relative capabilities as they search for great power status. Furthermore, accommodating such rising powers that are in economic and political transition into an established order is “difficult and disruptive.”<sup>58</sup> Without doubt, China is a nation in deep

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<sup>56</sup> Warren I. Cohen. “China’s Strategic Culture”, The Atlantic Monthly, March 1997, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Johnston. 253.

<sup>58</sup> Yuan. 138.

and turbulent transition, and the legitimacy of the nation's ruling elite may well depend upon the success of this transition. These conditions having been set, Chinese strategic culture and the extant global environment both suggest that the propensity for China to resort to force for political gains, *especially when irredentist issues of territorial sovereignty are involved*, may be high.

## **II. NORTH KOREA**

Were it not for North Korea's strategic location, and its capability to launch a destructive war against South Korea, the nation would escape the notice of most of the world. In spite of the attention it has garnered, North Korea's strategic direction has defied easy characterization, and remains enigmatic, unpredictable, and opaque. Consequently, the search to define and quantify a North Korean strategic culture has been difficult.

Kim Jong Il's centrality to his regime's strategic decisions and security priorities stands as the primary reason why a North Korean security strategy has eluded predictability: one man's whims, perceptions and decisions seem to stand at the epicenter of a nation's security apparatus. An extreme personalization of power that has passed from father to son has lasted over 46 years. Operating in an intensely secretive society, Kim Jong Il's condensation of power has successfully supplanted many uniquely cultural contributions that might have helped to define the nation's strategic game-plan.

In a very general sense, North Korea's strategic culture might be associated with three important variables: the foibles of Kim Jong Il, the North Korean stand toward South Korea, and the effects of North Korea's torrential economic decline on the nation's



ability to sustain any semblance of political or economic reform. The basic North Korean strategy towards South Korea has:

undergone repeated definition over the past half-century: a “use of force phase” (1945-1953), a “peace offensive phase” (1954-1961), a “revolutionary strategy phase” (1962-1969), a “negotiation phase” (1970-1979), a “confederation phase” (1980-1989), and a “coexistence phase” (1989-present).<sup>59</sup>

The sequence of these phases follows no logical strategic “flow”: they appear as short-sighted, “pell-mell” reactions to a fluid strategic environment, seemingly gaining no new strategic ground. Ultimately, the depths to which the North Korean economy continues to sink may determine if yet another redefinition of policy occurs.

It seems as if the North Korean economy might become the limiting factor that governs and compels the strategic actions of the nation. In this context, Kim Jong Il may couch his actions under the rubric of “system-defending reform.”<sup>60</sup> Given that North Korea has experienced one of the worst famines of the century, and that the nation’s economy is virtually unable to sustain any growth, “system defending reform” may materialize as unsavory gestures meant to prolong regime survival. These gestures could include the continued use, sale and proliferation of ballistic missiles, and the threat of continued nuclear research. Regardless, in North Korea (vis-à-vis China), the *in extremis* economy and the unpredictability of Kim Jong Il should condition policy and military planners to expect a wide latitude of strategic action. Decades of national decline, and the political myopia of a father and his son, have apparently replaced a North Korean strategic culture with a culture of mere survival.

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<sup>59</sup> Pollack and Lee. 32.

<sup>60</sup> Pollack and Lee. 34.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusions

In 1996, Joint Pub 3-01.5, *Doctrine for Joint Theater Missile Defense*, was published. That was also a fiscal year for which President Clinton vetoed the Defense Authorization Bill, citing expensive ballistic missile defense programs as one reason for his dissatisfaction: U.S. intelligence "did not foresee the existence of a ballistic missile threat to the US in the coming decade."<sup>61</sup> While his fiscal reasoning may have been sound, his general conclusion was a flawed extrapolation of the assessments of a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE). Mr. R. James Woolsey's testimony before Congress underscores how badly the President missed the mark on the overall threat and leverage that ballistic missiles could exert on U.S. national strategy:

To focus a NIE threat on the contiguous 48 states, in my judgement, is to focus on a sub-set, and not a particularly useful sub-set, of the strategic problems that are posed for us by other countries' possession of ballistic missiles in the post-cold-war era. [...] using an estimate that focuses on the contiguous 48 states to make judgements about our need for ballistic missile defense is akin to saying that because we believe that for the next number of years local criminals will not be able to blow up police headquarters in the District of Columbia, there is no serious threat to the safety and security of police in the district.<sup>62</sup>

The Straits of Taiwan crisis in 1996 bathed the President's remarks in irony. The launching of Chinese DF-15 missiles towards Taiwan compelled him to order two carrier battle groups to the straits, and brought the U.S. and China dangerously close to armed

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<sup>61</sup> R. James Woolsey, *Testimony on Ballistic Missile Defense, House Government Reform and Oversight Subcommittee on National Security*, 30 May 1996, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Woolsey, 6.

confrontation. The reality of the ballistic missile as a significant threat to American national interests was vivid, intense, and despite being thousands of miles away, it was immediately upon the President.

The impact of this event upon U.S. national strategy and military spending should not be lost upon observers of such issues. In 1998, Defense Secretary Cohen stated that Theater Missile Defense (TMD), with its concentration upon regional ballistic missile threats, was his greatest concern. In 1999, a senior Clinton administration official admitted that the North Korean Taepodong II missile threats have "put over the top the logic for beginning to develop national missile defense."<sup>63</sup> That same year, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott initiated attempts to modify the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in order to allow the United States to legally build its national missile defense, and four billion dollars were budgeted for ballistic missile defense programs.

## **I. THE NEW FACE OF ASIA**

The central thesis of this paper offers two assertions:

- Economic vitality and declining Western influence in Asia are gradually transforming Asia from a colonial geographic identity into a region with a modern and uniquely "Asian" consciousness.
- The tremendous political and military dividends yielded by the ballistic missile are extremely seductive, have established it as asymmetric warfare's touchstone, and have made it a likely weapon of choice for Asian nations while they undertake the slow process of military modernization.

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<sup>63</sup> Steven Mufson, *"Korean Missiles Push U.S. Defense Plans"*, The Washington Post, 5 September, 1999.

These phenomena have set the conditions for the spread of missile programs and technologies throughout the emerging economies of Asia. Concurrently, the U.S. has been extremely slow to admit that a policy of "Arms Control", or attempting to lock nations into a relatively low state of military development via diplomacy and treaties, has failed. *The essential strategic issue is not whether the U.S. can keep Asian armies isolated from sophisticated technologies, but rather, can the U.S. adapt to an Asia in which military modernization is eventually inevitable.*

U.S. security strategy for East Asia stresses the vital importance of maintaining an overseas military presence "to shape, respond and prepare", otherwise known as "Presence Plus."<sup>64</sup> The U.S. presence hopes to mitigate historical regional tensions, deter aggression and to prevent challenges from developing at all. In a pragmatic sense, the true reason for U.S. forward basing in Asia is the enduring U.S. belief that the absence of its military presence in Asia would "decrease overall U.S. economic, political, and military clout".<sup>65</sup> In spite of these fears, U.S. policy and military structure may not be keeping pace with reality: the forces of globalization, a robust Asian regional trade, and the diffusion of disruptive technologies are redefining Asian relations, roles and military capabilities. The United States has been reluctant to acknowledge the essence of this truth, and its eventual response has been in consonance with its tendency to attempt to resolve vexing political/economic problems by technical means.

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<sup>64</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region 1998*, DefenseLINK: <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/easr98/>.

<sup>65</sup> Deepa A. Ollapally, "Arms, Politics and the Emerging Asian Balance of Power", *Asian Affairs, An American Review*, 25, no.2, (Summer 1998), 111.

## II. THE SCUD REACTION

In 1991, Iraqi Al Hussein ballistic missiles bloodied U.S. forces in Desert Storm, and they severely tested the U.S led coalition when they hit Israeli cities. These events laid bare an Achilles heel to a weapon system that was becoming increasingly popular throughout the world. Saddam Hussein's choice of missile targets highlighted the American dependency upon Saudi port facilities and logistical support, as well as the absence of any missile-defense system. His actions forced the coalition to dedicate a significant amount of vital air assets to the relatively unsuccessful mission of "Scud Hunting", and they led to the rapid deployment of Patriot missiles to Israel. The word was out: ballistic missiles could wound Goliath.

Nine years after learning a hard and very expensive lesson, the United States is preparing to field its two premier Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD) systems: the sea-based Navy Theater Area system, and the land-based Patriot Advanced Capability Three (PAC-3) system.<sup>66</sup> Since both systems have interceptor speeds below 3 Km/second, and will engage missiles not covered by the 1972 ABM Treaty, they are legal, and have no formal deployment restrictions. If deployed in East Asia, the systems could provide a protective shield for either Taiwan or Japan, to include Okinawa.

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<sup>66</sup> The heart of the U.S. Navy's Theater Area system is the Aegis combat system, with its impressive radar and vertically launched SM-2 surface-to-air missiles. The PAC-3 system is simply an improved version of the old Patriot missile: a PAC-3 launcher has 16 active seeker head missiles, as compared to the PAC-2, which had 4 semi-active missiles. The Theater Area System will be deployed on either Aegis-equipped cruisers or *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers. By integrating highly mobile a sea-based area system with a land-based terminal defense system, U.S. defense planners hope to provide a "useful TBMD bubble over deployed forces overseas." (John D. Gersham, "*Navy Area Ballistic Missile Defense Coming on Fast*", U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, January 1999. 63.) The implications for a sea-based TBMD system are obvious: the U.S. could station TBMD assets in international waters to protect nations such Japan or even Taiwan without placing actual assets on foreign soil. The PAC-3 is limited in that it must be co-located with the target. A digital integration of both systems that will provide a redundant defense capability is obviously preferred, but it may not always be politically feasible.

In the theoretical arena, the Marine Corps' latest doctrinal proposal, *Operational Maneuver From the Sea* (OMFTS) stands as an interesting military proposal/solution to the problems of asymmetry and logistics. OMFTS is a conceptual development that focuses on alleviating the logistical pressures of extremely distant military operations, while mitigating the dangers generated by asymmetric weapons such as sea mines and ballistic missiles. The concept envisions the sea as maneuver space, and features over-the-horizon (i.e. 25 miles-plus offshore) ship-based logistics to support ship-to-objective maneuver (STOM) by air-transported forces of distances up to 100 miles. OMFTS faces a great deal of contention within the Marine Corps, would require an unlikely amount of budgetary support, and could not be implemented as envisioned for decades. However, OMFTS *is* significant in that it is the only service doctrine to specifically attempt to address the issues of asymmetry and rapid, sustained logistical support of force employment under one rubric.

### **III. FUTURE PROSPECTS**

However effective TBMD proves itself to be, its operational longevity will be a function of the rapidity with which nations such as China are able to modernize their military forces. The pace of modernization will most likely parallel economic growth: the evidence points to a strong positive correlation between a nation's wealth and its defense spending, with North Korea standing as a notable exception. If Asian nations cannot sustain the economic growth rates needed to fund domestic programs *and* defense spending, they could find themselves forced into painful, difficult fiscal decisions. It is clear that China wishes to consolidate a sense of identity as the world's next great power, and that the PLA's modernization is seen by the Chinese as critical to this transformation.

What remains uncertain is the manner in which the internal and global economic challenges facing China will affect the PLA's entrance into the precision strike/power-projection arena.

The ballistic missile stands as a hallmark of asymmetry, and as a symbol of modernity. In East Asia, its presence reveals essence of the "here and now", and speaks of the future. The United States must accept the implications of these revelations, and it must learn to adapt national strategy and military doctrine to a profoundly changing region. If it attempts to preserve an obsolete regional stasis, it may slowly, yet inevitably be cast aside by the currents of change.

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